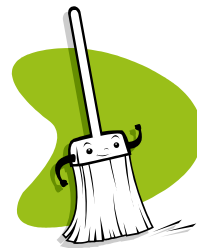


City of Taylorsville

Helpful Hints for Neighborhood Nuisances

How do I keep cats out of my planter beds? How can I deter pests without using chemicals? What slows down those sneaky weeds? These questions and others are answered in this collection of helpful hints and household remedies to help with household nuisances. Think of it as "Code Enforcement plays Heloise".



Errant Cats:

- **Wooden toothpicks.** Poked into the ground where you don't want the cats to go. Cats don't favor scratching around pokey sticks - and they are biodegradable.
- **Plastic forks.** Also poked into the ground, tines up, to discourage cats.
- **Motion action sprinklers.** Used to deter more than just cats, they deliver a blast of water when the motion triggers are tripped.
- **Chicken wire.** Laid flat on the ground, secured by some plant stakes, it makes another unpleasant scratching experience for cats. Plants will still grow through, and if you don't like the look of the wire, you can hide it with a layer of bark dust.
- **Ground covers.** Eliminate the places for digging. See section under Weed Control.
- **Deterrent sprays.** Marketed under names like "cat be gone", it contains scents that cats find offensive. Spray in the areas uninvited cats frequent.
- **Dog feces.** That's right - give those cats a taste of their own medicine. Toss some dog feces under the bushes the cats frequent and notice how they avoid the area. If the cats come back, ask the dog for a fresh donation or two to "re-scent" the area.
- **Cats stalking the birdfeeders.**
 - Ask the neighbor if you can put a small bell on the cat.
 - Keep bird feeders away from fences and trees that cats can climb.
 - Mount birdfeeders on a slippery pole, like a piece of pipe from the hardware store, instead of a wooden post.
 - For an added deterrent, you can also grease up the pole with petroleum jelly.
 - Use some of the other cat deterrent methods listed above.

Barking Dogs:

- **Friend not foe.** Make friends with dog treats (get pet owner approval first). Then when the dog hears you, it anticipates good things and does not need to bark. Works wonders!
- **Sound deterrents.** Emits a high frequency noise unpleasant to dogs' ears when they bark. Available for indoor and outdoor use, as collars or as small plug in units. Many have switches so people don't have to hear the noise as well.
- **Visual barriers.** When something passes by, many dogs are enticed by the shutter like view they receive through the fence. Consider blocking that view with trees, shrubs, climbing vines, or slats attached over the fence gaps.
- **Spritzing collars.** Startles pets with a quick mist spritz of water or pet deterrent scents (like citronella) when they bark.
- **Water.** Like the spritzing collars, a quick spray with a hose often teaches dogs that barking gets them wet.
- **Shaker cans.** A couple of pebbles in a soda can, taped shut and thrown in the vicinity of the barking dog can create the reinforcement you want. Dog barks, scary noise comes at dog, dog decides to keep quiet to avoid that scary noise.

Insects:

- **Praying Mantis.** An interesting insect with a voracious appetite for pests, it appears to stand on its hind legs and uses its front legs like arms. They are fun to watch and not interested in scaring people, they don't sting or bite, and they don't leave messy webs or ruined plants behind. Praying Mantis egg cases containing hundreds of baby Mantis' are available seasonally at many garden stores; usually cost under \$5.00, and look like dried grass balls about the size of a cherry tomato.
- **Citronella.** It's not just in candles. It is actually a plant reputed to give off its signature scent and repel bugs.
- **Borax.** Mix some powdered Borax with some sugar and sprinkle in an area where ants travel. It is alleged that the ants will carry both back to the nest, and the Borax will kill them. Borax is a type of laundry soap, so it is not as hazardous as poisons, but is still not recommended for use in areas where pets or children may eat it.
- **Ladybugs.** With a never-ending hunger for aphids, these pretty little dots of color are available seasonally at many garden stores. Purchase a low cost bagful and let them loose.

- **Gambuzio fish.** With water gardens being all the rage, you may find you have some increased mosquito populations. Koi and Goldfish may eat some of the bugs and larvae, but to make a bigger dent, call in the experts – mosquito-eating fish called Gambuzios. They are very small, very cheap, breed prolifically, and though they usually come in a natural grey, you can sometimes find them in a pale ivory – often under the name Albino or Ruby Gambuzios. Sold at select pond and garden stores, usually for about five to ten for a dollar, they grow only to the size of an aquarium type tetra, swim primarily in schools, and add an interesting backdrop to your water garden while snacking away on those nasty mosquito larvae.
- **Mosquito dunks.** Look like small donuts made of compressed granules. They contain a type of bacteria, which is deadly to mosquito larvae, but is marketed as safe for humans and domestic animals and are used by some in water troughs on farms. Just float them in the water and they release their ingredients slowly over a month. The number to use at one time depends on the amount of water you are “treating”. They can be found at local pond, garden, and feed stores usually in packs of eight to ten for around \$12.00.
- **Bug zappers.** With an attractively bright light and a zap of electricity, these now low cost items create quite the pile of fried bugs. There is however, controversy on if they kill more bugs than they attract, or if they actually attract more bugs which makes it look like they kill more.
- **Pest control services.** If you are just overrun by unwanted insects, or if you can’t stand the sight of even one, you might consider calling in the professionals for a service contract. Many companies offer monthly or quarterly services for spraying that will also include a guarantee if bugs show up in between services. Always do your research to make sure you are contracting with a professional and reputable service.

Weed Control:

- **Cedar.** Getting cedar chips instead of fir chips may help repel pests by its scent alone. For a finer coverage, you can also get large bales of cedar shavings at farm and feed stores.
- **Shredded rubber.** A newer form of “mulch” that is said to last forever and never rots or loses its color. Bugs don’t like it, cats don’t like it, and it doesn’t run in heavy rains. Weeds are suffocated under it, and any weeds blowing in over the top are easy to pluck out. Available in several colors just like bark dust mulch and many forms look very natural like quality shredded mulch.
- **Straw.** Get a bale for virtually nothing at a farm or feed store. Just spread it over the dirt and let it block the sunlight for those sneaky weed seeds. It also biodegrades on its own.
- **Plants as ground covers.** Though many types of Ivy plants are not available any longer due to their invasive nature, there are plenty of other ground covers that work great. Some, like Vinca, produce small twinkling flowers; others, like Creeping Mint, smell great when you step on them. Some varieties of Strawberries work wonderfully, spreading nicely, sustaining foot traffic, and producing tasty snacks. Succulent “rock garden” type plants, found in a multitude of varieties, can grow quickly from small starts taken from existing plants. Even some shrubs can work for ground covers especially when trimmed to discourage upward growth, like the low growing varieties of Euonymus. Keep in mind that ground covers also deter cats from using the area as a litter box.
- **PH altering.** Some interest has been generated over new products that contain no chemicals, yet stop all weeds and blackberries. With a super-high powered vinegar mixture, these products alter the PH of the soil making it uninhabitable to plant life. To reverse the process, you correct the soil PH level with common soil supplements like Lime. Available at select garden stores.
- **Other interesting ground covers.** Occasionally seen are some unusual and innovative ground covers that can really make a statement. What about empty Walnut or Hazelnut shells instead of bark dust? And Pine cones substituted for large bark chips. Or any of the multitudes of rock varieties like red lava rock, white quartz, grey, beige, slate blue, or desert pink rocks and pebbles, and even chips of granite or marble. Like something really unusual? Try broken sea shells or tumbled recycled colored glass to put a sparkle in the yard. For materials that don’t biodegrade, it is suggested a landscaping cloth be installed first, so if you change your landscaping décor, you can more easily remove the old materials.

Junk and Clutter:

- If you haven’t seen it in 6 months or haven’t used it for a year, then get rid of it.
- If it is a useful item, give it to a family member, donate it to charity, or sell it in a garage sale.
- If it doesn’t have a use unless you fix it, consider if it is truly donation worthy. If not, arrange for an extra trash pickup, pool together with neighbors for a “dump” run, or call a private disposal service.
- If you just can’t part with it, then find a proper place to put it. Reorganize the attic, build a shed, clean the garage, or even rent a storage facility.
- Remember, a good “rule of thumb” is “for everything you bring into the house, you should also bring something out”. And “out” does not mean “into the yard”.

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